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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [MASS](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: AT RISK "BETWEEN YEMEN AND SOMALIA," GODJ ASKS FOR
CT HELP

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (C), (D)

1.(C) Summary: Djiboutian Foreign Minister convoked Ambassador January 4 to convey a verbal message from President Guelleh requesting additional USG counter-terrorism assistance in view of growing extremist threats from Somalia and Yemen. Djibouti is "in the middle" of these high-risk countries, the Minister noted, but receives only modest CT assistance from the USG. Embassy believes there would be benefit to increasing USG assistance for (1) GODJ's incipient anti-terrorism unit, (2) border security programs, and (3) professionalization of police and security forces. This assistance would not only improve security for Djiboutians, but would also enhance force protection for the more than 2,000 U.S. military personnel stationed at Camp Lemonnier (the only U.S. military base in sub-Saharan Africa) and the nearly 100 U.S. naval vessels that call at Djibouti Port annually. End summary.

2.(S/NF) Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Yousseuf called in Ambassador early January 4. Yousseuf said that President Ismail Omar Guelleh had spoken with him the night before, very concerned about extremist threats from Somalia and Yemen. Conveying the President's message, Yousseuf said the threat is "growing closer." Earlier this week, Djiboutian services picked up two al-Shabaab operatives in Djibouti who were apparently conducting surveillance or other preparations for a possible attack. The nexus between Al Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab in Somalia and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen is clear, as al-Shabaab is now pledging to send reinforcements to AQAP.

3.(C) Yousseuf said the President had stressed that Djibouti faces special risks because it is "in the middle, between Yemen and Somalia." While grateful for modest USG counter-terrorism assistance (see para 4), this support could usefully be increased he said. He also proposed that assistance to Djibouti also be included in discussions he said would be held in London on January 28 to address requirements in Yemen.

4.(S/NF) Ambassador said USG was indeed aware of risks faced by Djibouti in this dangerous neighborhood and assured the Foreign Minister he would convey the request for additional USG CT assistance. Ambassador noted current USG CT programs in Djibouti include: operation of TIP/PISCES watchlists at Djibouti International Airport; an S/CT-funded \$500,000 project in the early

stages of implementation to rehabilitate a border post at Loyada (on the Somaliland frontier) to permit installation of TIP/PISCES; and a PKO-funded \$1.9 million project in the early stages of implementation to provide weapons, ammunition, and facilities improvements to Djibouti's embryonic anti-terrorism unit. This unit has also received some limited informal mentoring from USG personnel in Djibouti. Djibouti and USG also cooperate in CT intel-sharing, and a number of other assistance programs (e.g., Regional Maritime Awareness Capability, MEGAPORTS counter-proliferation monitoring, and harbor security units) that support CT objectives, though that is not their sole focus.

5.(C) Comment: While Djibouti has benefited from limited USG counter-terrorism assistance, the Foreign Minister makes a valid argument that the country still faces grave risks from extremist elements operating in Somalia and Yemen. Djibouti's hostile northern neighbor Eritrea -- whose role as a regional spoiler led to sanctions imposed December 24 in UNSCR 1907 -- compounds the danger. Additional USG assistance to enhance (1) Djibouti's nascent anti-terrorism unit, (2) Djiboutian border security, and (3) the overall professional capabilities of its military and police forces would not only safeguard Djiboutians, but also contribute to force protection for the more than 2,000 U.S. military personnel at Camp Lemonnier and the nearly 100 U.S. Navy ships that call at Djibouti Port annually. USG assistance in response to this request would also recognize Djibouti's role as a close CT partner for the USG in the region. End comment.

SWAN